

suggest caressing, hand-pressing, kissing, fondling, or anything of that sort. "No intelligent young woman intentionally compromises herself in the eyes of any man. But unintentionally and unconsciously not a few do cheapen themselves, if indeed they do not destroy their reputations, through an over-ardent and inconsiderate desire to be 'agreeable.' The girl, though she may escape any serious wrong-doing, is soiled and messed by over-much handling: she becomes 'shop-worn,' or 'second-hand goods,' and, by the world's best judges, is invoiced at a discount. While many young men may seem attracted, pleased, and entertained by it, still, somehow, and for sufficient reason, they distrust it and, eventually, they seek other girls for better companionship. The girl who by a dignified but cordial and ingenuous conduct, compels a young man instinctively to keep his proper distance, in speech and in behaviour, commands thereby his most profound respect, and at the same time she secures for herself the best reputation, the purest character, and the keenest satisfaction."¹

Flirting, again, whether it be merely in fun or seriously, is quite inexcusable; and a girl who flirts must be prepared to be treated

¹ This and other thoughts expressed in this paper I owe to the writings of Mr. L. W. Sperry.

110

in the same way by men. Moreover she will always be in danger of having any real affection she may feel for a man mistaken for a mere flirtation, and may in consequence suffer bitter humiliation and pain. It is worse than downright meanness for a woman or a man to trifle with each other in a matter of such importance as love and marriage.

(3) FALLING IN LOVE

True love—the sort of love that leads eventually to marriage—may show itself suddenly, as we say, “at first sight”; or it may be a matter of gradual growth. But in either case it is of the first importance that those who think themselves in love should carefully consider and examine whether the grounds of what they think to be love are real and right and abiding. To wed in haste and then to repent at leisure—the leisure of a life-long unhappy marriage—is, alas, not an uncommon experience, and is due to the fact that what was thought to be love was not really love at all.

(4) COURTSHIP

One and perhaps the main purpose of courtship is to give an opportunity to both the man and the woman to test the character of the attraction which they feel towards each other. "A rational courtship," it has been said, "is a large factor in one's real education, whether it leads to marriage, or to the conviction that the two are not intended for each other." And not only is it a time to test the nature of the attraction which has drawn them together, but also to feel and learn the character of each other—to study each other's tastes and peculiarities—to gain a knowledge of each other's principles and habits and inward desires. It is astonishing how many couples marry with hardly any knowledge of each other's real character, with the result that often after the wedding-day there is a rude awakening and a bitter disappointment, arising from the gradual discovery that they are not suited to live together in the closeness of the married life.

There are three things which a woman would always do well to find out before she agrees to any definite engagement: (a) the

1.13

real character of the man who is courting her. This she will largely discover, if she is a healthy, right-minded girl, by her own woman's wit, and by her observation of his conduct when he is with other people, or is unconscious of her presence. But if the girl is wise she will do more than this; she will be at pains, quietly and prudently, to make inquiries of those she knows she can trust, and who have personal knowledge of the man, of what sort he is, and what have been his antecedents. If the report she receives is doubtful, she would do well to be very careful before she commits herself to him for life. And here I would wish to give a plain and strong warning. Many a woman thinks that, once married, she will have power to change the character and habits of her husband, and marries a man largely because she thinks she can save him from the faults and sins which mark his character. "When we are once married he will give up that for my sake," many a woman has said or thought. And many a woman has been grievously disappointed. Be sure of this—that if a man will not really and honestly break with what is mean and wrong when he is seeking to win a wife, he will not give up the wrong thing when he has won her. For the happiness of married life high principle and honesty of

141

character in the husband is everything ; if that is absent the result of marriage can only be unhappiness.

A fair amount of similarity in their tastes is another important matter. It is not necessary that husband and wife should think exactly the same on every point, or be interested in exactly the same things—probably a certain amount of difference in tastes and opinions is healthy and good ; but if there is any very great divergence in thought or in tastes, it may lead either to husband and wife living their life practically apart, or to continual disputes between them, and either of these alternatives is incompatible with a really happy married life.

(b) A second thing a woman should be most careful about is to find out the religious opinions of the man she thinks of marrying. Extraordinary as it may seem, this is a matter which many who marry appear to think is of no importance. And yet it is the very foundation of any real happiness. A marriage between two people belonging to different religious bodies or of strongly divergent religious opinions is seldom a happy one, and must, when children come, make very serious difficulties in their bringing-up. If marriage is to be what GOD means it to be, and if it is to bear the strain of

1.5

sorrow, sickness, difficulty, and anxiety from which no married people are or can expect to be altogether free, a common and united religious faith is the only power which can give peace and strength and bring real inward joy.

(c) Thirdly, a woman will do well to take financial matters into consideration. "Love in a cottage" is very well in theory, but often uncommonly uncomfortable and disastrous in practice. But while on the one hand improvident marriages are to be condemned, on the other hand the idea that a man and woman cannot marry unless they can ensure all the luxuries to which they have been accustomed is an utterly false one. It is beyond dispute that the standard of living in many ranks of society is ridiculously extravagant and unchristian. If a young man has trained the gifts which GOD has given to him, and has a trade or profession which promises a reasonably certain and gradually increasing income, and if the maiden whom he marries is healthy in body and mind, simple in tastes, and wise in heart and soul, they may be poor as the world counts wealth, but there is no reason why their married life should not be abundantly rich in love, in interest, in work and in simple enjoyments. Under these conditions they will be

1.16

thoroughly happy and able to bring up as many children as GOD shall see fit to send them, as healthy and effective citizens, loving sons and daughters, and humble and happy servants of GOD.

(5) CONDUCT DURING COURTSHIP

A woman who values her character will be careful to guard against any undue intimacy; and no girl who is wise will permit an admirer to spend much time with her when no other human eye can see. She will remember that courtships do not necessarily end in marriage, and that while there is no definite engagement between them, neither is bound to the other. The days of courtship should be characterized by simple dignity and frankness, by good sense, mingled with a moderate amount of sentiment, and free from all silly mystery or secrecy. Such a courtship leads naturally and happily to a definite engagement, and carries with it nothing but the happiest memories.

112

(6) ENGAGEMENT

An engagement is equivalent to the betrothal of the woman to the man, and is the last step before the actual wedding. But even a betrothal is not certain to issue in marriage; and a woman would do well to bear this in mind. It is, alas! a very common idea that betrothal gives the same rights as marriage, or anyhow that it is not a great sin for those who are engaged to anticipate what marriage allows. Let it be understood quite clearly that any undue intimacy or wrong act between an engaged couple is sin—and a sin which is not covered or excused by subsequent marriage. Marriage may indeed hide the act from the eyes of the world, but the man or the woman who in the days of their engagement lose their self-control, begin their married life under the shadow of a great sin: while many a woman who has yielded to the unmanly solicitations of her lover, has found herself deserted by him and left to bear alone the whole burden of the shame.

For this reason it is best that not more than a few months should intervene between an



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